

My Neighbors



"What's the matter with you... this is delicious!"

Review of State Budget Studies Points to Issues

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Our 1960 Budget Session will be a matter of history as you read this, but as I write now it is impossible for me to predict its outcome. The battle of the budget is still being fought vigorously on the floor of the Assembly, while the Senate is calmly working out its recommended version of the state expenditure program for next year.

A brief review of Assembly action so far on the budget bill will serve to illustrate the major issues which have delayed final action in that house on the big spending bill. All these issues, and more, either already have been, or are now being thoroughly scrutinized in floor debate.

THE BUDGET bill as originally introduced called for an expenditure program of \$2.477 billion. The ways and means committee, after weeks of hearings, cut it back to \$2.472 billion, a net reduction of about \$4.5 million. Sent to the floor in this shape, an immediate attempt was made to bring it up for fast final action, but the motion failed to get the necessary two-thirds vote.

When the bill came up in regular order, the way was opened for proposed amendments, and they came, a whole rash of them. They ranged all the way from relatively modest proposals to cut a few more thousands from the bill to more generous ones involving the addition of millions.

SALARY INCREASE for state employees proved to be a major area of conflict. As presented by the administration, the budget bill included an amount sufficient to give a five per cent increase to all state employees, effective at the start of the new fiscal year, July 1st. But several proposals for further raises for various groups of employees were put across the desk, including such classifications as University employees, state college teachers, custodial employees of the corrections department and security employees at Atascadero Hospital, and certain psychiatric employees.

Debate over each such proposal waxed heavy, but written into the bill were those for the University, the colleges, and psychiatric workers. Also accepted was an amendment moving the effective date of the general raise up to April 1st. These changes upped the budget by some \$17 million to a new record high of \$2.489 billion.

THE CONTROVERSY over state printed school textbooks flared up again because of a proposed amendment. Earlier, the state board of education had, for the first time in history, approved the purchase of entire textbooks from their publishers, instead of the usual practice of leasing the plates from them and then printing the books in our state printing plant.

The ways and means committee had knocked out the \$2.5 million item to buy the books. A strong effort was made to have it restored, but got nowhere.

ALSO SNOWED under by an avalanche of "No" votes was a proposal for an across the board five per cent cut in the whole state budget. One legislator ironically pointed out that this would mean cutting our own salaries.

The Senate will have acted on its own version of the budget bill by the time you read this. As of now I believe I am sure in saying that a bill will land on the Governor's desk in this session, but in precisely what form is anyone's guess. Our special session will probably continue into early April.

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